



# Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India

## **CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT**

**April - September 1930**

**Volume XI**

**October 1930 - December 1941**

**Volume XII**

**Edited by. : Dr. K. K. Chaudhari**

GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA  
MUMBAI

## **PROLOGUE**

I am very glad to bring out the e-Book Edition (CD version) of Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement. This e-book edition is facsimile reproduction of already published volumes.

So far twelve volumes are published under this series. They contain valuable data regarding India's struggle for freedom. These volumes form an important source for the scholars, historians who are interested in studying different phases and dimensions of the freedom movement. The material is collected from Government's secrete and confidential official records. Thus, these volumes have made available that information which was so far not easily accessible to the scholars.

Considering utility of these volumes, need was felt to preserve this treasure of knowledge. In this age of modernization, information and technology have become key words. To keep pace with the changing need of hour, I have decided to bring out a CD version of these volumes. I am sure, scholars and studious persons across the world will find these CDs immensely beneficial.

This CD contains Volume XI, "Civil Disobedience Movement (April-September 1930)" published in 1990 and Volume XII and "Civil Disobedience Movement (October 1930-December 1941)" published in 1995. Both of these volumes were edited by Dr. K.K.Chaudhari.

I am thankful to the Honourable Minister, Shri. Ashokrao Chavan (Industries and Mines, Cultural Affairs and Protocol), and the Minister of State, Shri. Rana Jagjitsinh Patil (Agriculture, Industries and Cultural Affairs), Shri Bhushan Gagrani, (Secretary, Cultural Affairs) Department, Government of Maharashtra for being a constant source of inspiration.

Place: Mumbai

Dr. Arunchandra S. Pathak

Date: 26th January 2007

Executive Editor and Secretary

## FOREWORD

I am glad to publish this volume on the Civil Disobedience Movement in the series "source Material for a History of freedom Movement in India with special reference to Maharashtra. I cherish the belief that the historians of the Freedom Movement, and particularly of the civil disobedience in Bombay City and parts of present Maharashtra, will find this volume highly useful for comprehending the depth and width of the movement. I may be justified in cherishing such a belief because the documents contained in the volume were hitherto unpublished and inaccessible to historians due to official restrictions of secrecy. Even after the closed period for official records was reduced from fifty to thirty years, these documents are still not available to historians either by way of archival material in the Maharashtra Government Archives or direct access to the records of the Police Commissioner of Bombay or Maharashtra's Director General of Police, except under a very special permission of the Government. The hitherto unpublished documents included in this volume are drawn from the hoards of either Bombay's Police Commissioner or the Director General of Police, except for some documents drawn from the National Archives of India, New Delhi and Bombay Native Newspaper Reports.

Before speaking about the documents and the mode of their arrangement, it may be apt to say a few words about the movement itself.

Gandhiji himself spoke of civil disobedience as a holy war, a fight to the finish from which there could be no retreat, and possibly his own 'last chance'. This was in reality not his last chance because he had another one in 1942. Gandhiji's horoscope allegedly predicted that he would die in 1930. But he disbelieved in the prediction. Rather he felt, and very strongly, that if he did not launch a continental movement now, violence might overwhelm public life and he might not be in a position to guide the destiny of India as he wished.<sup>1</sup> He was aware that civil disobedience was a test of his leadership. For the Mahatma civil disobedience was not merely a movement for the realisation of 'Purna Swaraj' as resolved by the Congress at Lahore (1929). It was for him an attempt at the moral regeneration of society as the foundation of a new political order in India. As a civil disobedience expert, he was authorized by the Congress Working Committee (14-16 February 1930) to start civil disobedience as and when he desired and to the extent he decided. He was to be the sole decision maker on behalf of the Working Committee. He expounded his message of Swaraj through Press interviews and his writing in the *Navajivan* and *Young India*. Gandhiji himself inaugurated the movement at Dandi in Surat district, and the inaugural coincided with the anniversary of the Rowlatt Satyagraha (6 April) which had culminated

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<sup>1</sup> Gandhiji to Mahadev Desai, 9 and 25 April 1930, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XLIII, pp. 217, 321.

into the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. There at Dandi, a coastal village of no importance, Gandhiji picked up a lump of mud and salt as a signal for his breaking the salt laws. This symbolic gesture ignited a movement all over India which shook the imperial power.

Prior to embarking on civil disobedience Gandhiji wrote a letter to Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, as a 'sacred duty peremptory on a civil register (pp 6-10). It was not intended to be a threat or an alarm but a sort of plea and ultimatum to undo the wrong done by the British to India, Gandhiji wrote that the plan through civil disobedience would be to combat such evils as sampled out in the letter, He dispatched the letter; through a Young English friend Reginald Reynolds who believed in the Indian cause and the Gandhian way of non-violence and civil resistance to achieve it.

Civil disobedience was simultaneously inaugurated all over India, but the main ritual for Maharashtra was inaugurated at Juhu-Ville Parle under the stewardship of Jamnalal Bajaj. There was tremendous enthusiasm both among men. and women. Congress leaders such as K. F. Nariman, B. G. Kher, Shankarrao Deo, S. D. Jawadekar, Goculbhai Bhatt, Kishorelal Mashruwala, G. V. Ketkar, Yasudeo Vithal Dastane, Dr. V. N. Athalye, Anant Vasudeo Sahasrabuddhe and hundreds of others were activating the masses for some time past. The Ville Parle camp eventually became the centre for co-ordination of the movement in Maharashtra. Several batches of Congress satyagrahis from almost all districts of Western Maharashtra participated in the salt satyagraha at Ville Parle.

The salt satyagraha was more intense in the Bombay Presidency than any other part of India. The main source of salt supply in this region was sea salt made in the salt works owned or leased out by the Government, the main works being at Dharasana, Chharvada and Wadala. A series of raids on the Wadala salt depot was an important part of salt satyagraha in Bombay The raids at Wadala depot on 16 April, 18 May, 25 May and 1 June 1930 were spectacular. The raid on 1 June was the biggest in which nearly 15,000 volunteers participated under the leadership of Mrs. Lilavati Munshi and Mrs. Harnam Kaur. Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya was arrested in the earlier raid.

The people of Maharashtra won a great moral victory in the first phase of the righteous war by Gandhiji by maintaining perfect peace in the face of grave provocation by Government authorities. Not a day passed in Bombay City without the police indulgence in reckless lathi charges for dispersing satyagrahi volunteers in peaceful formations. However, the arrest of Gandhiji in the depth of midnight in a mysterious manner (4-5 May) under the old and rusty Regulation of 1827 enacted by the East India Company, introduced an element of violence in the movement in some areas. It was a blunder on the part of Government. The immediate reaction to this unjust action was the riots at Sholapur which ushered in the Martial Law in that town. There were harrowing news of the wanton firing on the people in Sholapur. Besides many killed in firing, Mallappa Dhanshetti, Jagannath Jadhav, Shrikisan Sarada

and Kuruban Hussain were sentenced to death, although the Judges differed with regard to the sentence.

Besides the violation of salt regulations, civil disobedience assumed the form of forest satyagraha, picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops and propagation of swadeshi goods and Khadi. The movement was most intense in Bombay City, Bombay suburban District, coastal areas, Poona City, Sholapur, Nasik, Jalgaon and Satara districts of Western Maharashtra, and Wardha, Nagpur, Amravati and Akola districts of Vidarbha.

Salt satyagraha was launched almost all over Maharashtra simultaneously. At the apex there was the Maharashtra Civil Disobedience Committee with G. V. Ketkar and Shankarrao Deo, its president and secretary, respectively. They inducted hundreds of local leaders and volunteers in every district. The first war council for Western Maharashtra was appointed at Pune on 13 March 1930. Besides Deo and Jawadekar, the other members of the war council were G. V. Ketkar of Pune, Dr. V. V. Athalye of Satara, S. P. Patwardhan of Ratnagiri and V. V. Dastane of Bhusaval. All of them rallied public opinion and encouraged formation of war councils and satyagraha committees in all districts. The activities of the above mentioned committee were directed and executed by many leaders. A few names are mentioned below : Gangadharrao Deshpande, Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar, T. R. Deogirikar, Narhar Vishnu Gadgil, Prof. Dharmanand Kosambi, Gajanan Narayan Kanitkar, Achyutrao Sitaram Patwardhan, Appasaheb Patwardhan, Achyut Balwant Kolhatkar, J. M. Mehta, Lalji Pendse, R. N. Mandlik, L. B. Bhopatkar, Damodar Vishwanath Gokhale, Dattatraya Nathoba Wandrekar Popatlal Shah, Shripad Shankar Navare, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Prof. R. V. Rabade, Shrinivas Ganesh Sardesai, Vithal Vasudeo Gokhale, Ramkrishnadas Buwa, Waman Pandurang Kabadi, Govindrao Dharmaji Vartak, Hanumant Ramchandra Mahajani, M. R. Gosavi, Vasudeo Govind Kulkarni, Annasaheb Phulambrikar, Kundanmal Sobhachand Firodiya, K. R. Sumant, Dr. Krishnarao Antolikar, Pandit Shivprasad Sharma, S. M. Joshi, Nanasahab Gore, Dattatraya Balkrishna Kalelkar, Narayan Sitaram Phadke, Pandurang Sadashiv Sane, V. G. Ketkar (Tilak's son-in-law), H. V. Tulpule, Dr. A. K. Bhagwat, Senapati Bapat, N. C. Kelkar, J. S. Karandikar, Keshavrao Marotrao Jedhe, Annasaheb Shinde, P. K. Shiralkar, G. S. Palsule, D. V. Divekar, Baburao Bhide, S. G. Ranade, Appasaheb Apte, Haribhau M. Joshi, Tarkateertha Laxmanshastri Joshi, Sakhavalkar, Vinoba Bhave, Veer Wamanrao Joshi, Dr. Narayan Bhaskar Khare, Moreshwar Vasudeo Abhyankar, Nilkanth Ramrao Deshmukh, Purushottam Balwant Gole, R. S. Ruikar, Brijlal Biyani, Poonamchand Ranka, Pandit Sunderlal, Pandit Bhagwandin, M. S. Aney, Mrs. Durgabai Joshi, Dr. Balkrishna Shivram Munje, Keshavrao Baliram Hedgewar, Purushottam Yeswant Deshpande, Ramrao Madhavrao Deshmukh, Anasuyabai Kale, Dattatraya Ganesh Kale, Hari Vinayak Pataskar, Dhanji Nana Chaudhari, Deokinandan Narayan, Ziprubuwa, Shankar Motiram Kabra, Sitaram Bhauji Chaudhari, R. D. Bhoge, Appasaheb Ranadive, Anant Vasudeo Sahasrabuddhe, V. B. Karnik, D. B. Kamik, etc.

The coastal districts gave an excellent account during the salt satyagraha. Satyagraha camps were opened at shiroda, Vengurla, Ratnagiri, Malwan, Mithbav and Redi. Gangadnarao Deshpande and Appasaheb Patwarahan stirred the masses in Ratnagiri district, they were joined by the stalwarts like Deogirkar, Dastane, S. G. Ranade, Sakhavaikai and Mir iihukrulla. in Raigad and Thane districts the battle treat was activated by R. N. Mandlik, ttaribhau Joshi, Janmadas Mehta, Baburao Gokhale and Govindrao Vartak.

Shiroda Salt Satyagraha in Ratnagiri district was a remarkable event, it was a peaceful demonstration of resistance against the repressive Government. There were several aspects or this satyagrana which Gandhiji was highly pleased to know, the largest contingent of satyagrahis came from Bombay, Jalgaon and Satara. the non-violent crusade began under the leadership of Appasaheb Patwardhan, S. D. Jawadekar, Mamasahab Deogirkar, Dr. Athalye, Vinayakrao Bhuskute, Dr. Lagu, Annasaheb Dastane, Sitaram Bhauji Cnaudhari, Dr. Dharmandnd Kosambi, Dr. Bhagwat, Soman and Sahasrabuddhe. The police mercilessly beat the volunteers, even the Red Cross men did not escape police beating.

In Central Provinces and Berar the salt satyagraha was symbolic and not widespread due to absence of salt works. the Berar Pradesh Congress Committee inaugurated the Movement at Dahihanda in Akola district on 12 April 1930. Volunteers prepared salt from a saline well at the village and distributed it for sale throughout the region.

A war council established at Nagpur prepared ground for a mass satyagraha. M. S. Aney joined the war council. Prominent Responsivists like Dr. Munje, Ramrao Deshmukh and *Dr.* Hedgewar followed Aney. The natural target in C. P. and Berar was forest regulations. Forest satyagraha gathered momentum from June 1930. The Governor, Sir Montagu Butler expressed fear and reported that the situation was out of hand in Nagpur and Jubbulpur.

Leaders like Jamnalal Bajaj, Wamanrao Joshi, Brijalai Biyani, Moreshvar Abhyankar, P. B. Gole, Poonamchand Ranka, Dr. N. B. Khare, Nilkanthrao Deshmukh, Durgabai Joshi, S. T. Dharmadhikari, N. M. Ghatwai, Abbas Tyabji, P. Y. Deshpande, etc. activated public opinion.

Now a few words about the selection of the documents and their arrangement in this Volume. In the very nature of things, the publication of documents pertaining to a history of freedom struggle can be the outcome only of proper selection. There are thousands of documents and Government reports pertaining to this important period in history. But here in this volume only those, which are relevant for a study of the political struggle against the British, have been selected. Even in the selected documents it has seemed desirable, for me as Editor, either to omit certain paragraphs or to select only extracts because of the irrelevance or relevance to the theme of the series. In many cases where the portion of a document is omitted, a line of asterisks has been inserted to indicate where the excisions occur.

In several cases the contents of the documents are briefly indicated in the editorial notes printed in italics. I believe that these notes might enable the reader to understand the context of the documents and the importance of the event in Civil Disobedience Movement. The user of this volume might also find the editorial notes on such topics as "Civil Disobedience: A Crusade", "Genesis of the Movement", "Civil Disobedience in Vidarbha". extremely useful. Indeed such an attempt is being made for the first time in this series.

A great majority of the hitherto unpublished documents included in the present volume are drawn either from the records in the offices of the Commissioner of Police and the Director General of Police or the National Archives of India or the Bombay Native Newspaper Reports of the Government of Bombay. The principal categories of the selected documents are, (i) the Daily Reports of Police Commissioner of Bombay submitted to the Home Secretary of the Government of Bombay, (ii) extracts from the *Bombay Congress Bulletin*, *Revolt*, *Vanguard*, *Bombay Chronicle*, *Times of India* and other bulletins and newspapers, (iii) Police Abstracts of Intelligence, and (iv) extracts from the native newspaper reports.

While I was initially predisposed towards a topical arrangement of the documents, I came subsequently to a different conclusion. It occurred that topical arrangement had inherent disadvantages. Even a strictly chronological arrangement of all sorts of documents was not thought plausible. Hence the arrangement of documents has been made in four parts as under.

Part I—Daily Reports of Police Commissioner of Bombay.

Part II—Bombay Presidency Police Abstracts of Intelligence.

Part III—Central Provinces Police Abstracts of Intelligence.

Part IV—Reports on the Native Indian Newspapers in the Bombay Presidency.

Each of the Parts begins with the Editor's introductory note printed in italics. The documents in each Part are arranged in a chronological order. In determination of the chronological order the date of dispatch has been taken as basis except in the case of the *Bombay Congress Bulletin* and other newsletters. In the case of these newsletters the date of their being forwarded to Government by the Police Commissioner has been taken as the basis of classification, irrespective of the date of their issue.

Footnotes have been appropriately added to enable the user of this volume to appreciate the role of concerned person or the event in question. The user, it is believed, would find them informative and helpful in further research.

The next period—a crucial period—of the Civil Disobedience Movement from October 1930 to April 1933 will be covered in the next Volume No. XII. The highlights of this Volume will be the Round Table Conference, Gandhi-Irwin Pact, resumption of the Movement and arrest of leaders on 4 January 1932, the proclamation of Ordinances, etc.

I am thankful to the Director General of Police, Maharashtra State , Commissioner of Police, Bombay ; Director of Maharashtra State Archives ; and Director of the National Archives of India, New Delhi for releasing the necessary documents and records but for which this Volume would not have seen the light of the day.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my gratitude to Dr. P. N. Chopra, Shri D. B. Karnik, Dr. A. P. Jamkhedkar and Dr. Y. M. Pathan, members of the Maharashtra District Gazetteers Editorial Board who scrutinised the material and made some useful suggestions.

The collection of material from countless papers was a tremendous task. However the same was achieved with the help of Deputy Editor Shri S. K. Khilare and Assistant Research Officers Sarvashri S. S. Gaikwad, R. S. Urade, R. S. Kumbhar and Smt. S. M. Kelkar. I was also assisted at different stages of the work by Joint Editor Dr. V. N. Gurav ; Research Officers Shri P. N. Narkhede, Mrs. M. S. Modikhane and Shri N. R. Patil: and Assistant Research Officers Smt. N. S. Alawani, Sarvashri K. Z. Raut. D. J. Nawadkar, V. B. Sangrulkar, R. R. Hanwatkar and the Administrative Officer Shri P. S. Khobrekar. I am thankful to all of them.

Shri P. S. More, Director, Government Printing and Stationery; and Shri K. S. Banhatti, Manager, Government Press and Book Depot, Nagpur and other staff of the Press also deserve many thanks for expeditious printing of this Volume.

Bombay  
2 October 1990.

K. K. CHAUDHARI  
Executive Editor and Secretary



## ABBREVIATIONS

A. I. C. C.	All India Congress Committee
BB & CI Rly.	Bombay, Baroda, and Central India Railway
B. P. C. C.	Bombay Provincial Congress Committee
C. I. D.	Criminal Investigation Department
C. P.	Commissioner of Police
C. P. & B.	Central Provinces and Berar
C. P. C	Criminal Procedure Code
C. W. C.	Congress Working Committee
D. C. P.	Deputy Commissioner of Police
D. I. G.	Deputy Inspector General of Police
G. I. P.	Great Indian Peninsula Railway
I. P. C.	Indian Penal Code
M. P. C. C.	Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee
P. C.	Police Constable
R. I.	Rigorous Imprisonment
R. T. C.	Round Table Conference
S. I.	Simple Imprisonment

## LIST OF PRINCIPAL HOLDERS OF OFFICE

Secretary of State for India	Sir Wedgewood Ben
Viceroy of India	Ford Irwin
Home Member, Govt of India	M. H. Haig
Governor of Bombay	Sir Frederick Hugh Sykes
Governor of Central Provinces and Berar	Sir Montagu Butler
Home Secretary, Govt. of Bombay	G. F. S. Collins
Commissioner of Police, Bombay	P. Kelly (up to May 1930) D. Healy (from June 1930)

## CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

### CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE: A CRUSADE

*Mahatma Gandhi's continental campaign of Civil Disobedience against the imperial Government in India was by far the most formidable challenge to British authority in India. Unprecedented as it was, the movement challenged the Government's moral authority and its power to control its subjects. Even the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin had to admit, "Most of my thought at the moment is concentrated upon Gandhi. I wish I knew sure what the right way to deal with him is". The Viceroy was caught in the horns of a dilemma : he could neither arrest Gandhiji without serious consequences, nor could allow the spread of the movement throughout the country under the Mahatma's inspiration. Irwin's Director of Public Information later pointed out : the Viceroy faced "a desperate dilemma". He was trying for a successful Round Table Conference to solve India's problem. The immediate arrest of Gandhiji would have hampered these efforts. Gandhiji himself put Irwin's dilemma as under : "The Government's plight is that of the serpent which has swallowed a rat. It would find it hard to resort to either course of action allowing me to remain out or putting me behind the bars".*

*Gandhiji evoked a tremendous popular admiration which was never before enjoyed by any Indian. His role in Indian politics was extraordinary, when seen against the barriers to national leadership created by regional divisions and communal tensions, and by the lack of proper mass media.*

*A correct evaluation of Civil Disobedience Movement can be made from the following quotation :*

*" MAHATMA GANDHI embarked upon the Civil Disobedience Movement with a sense of spiritual exaltation, guided not by reason but by inner inspiration. He proclaimed the struggle as a holy war, a fight to the finish from which there could be no retreat, and possibly his own 'last chance'. It was this movement which was a crowning point in terms, both of the establishment of his absolute but exalted leadership and of the universal acceptance of the preaching of truth, non-violence, fearless defiance of evil and Swadeshim. Even the wider world also watched the satyagraha experiment with inquisitiveness as to whether the Mahatma could score victory through truth and non-violence or would prove to be a political twister. Judged through this angle, the movement turned out to be a grand saga of stoic determination and peaceful resistance against the mighty power on earth....It was an effort towards the moral regeneration of society and the foundation of a new political order".<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> K. K. Chaudhary, *Maharashtra and Indian Freedom Struggle*, (Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1985), p.79.

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*Bombay Presidency was in the forefront of the movement from the very beginning. Bombay city, which had played a vital role during the Rowlatt Satyagraha, the Non-Co-operation Movement (and later the Quit India Movement), was in the vanguard throughout Civil Disobedience. Bombay's part in the movement was a model for the rest of India. The thrust of the movement was so powerful that the Governor of Bombay, Ford Sykes argued with Ford Irwin that the policy of treating Civil Disobedience in Bombay Presidency, and Bombay City particularly, should not be uniform throughout India and that it could not be dealt under the ordinary laws. The Bombay Government told the Government of India that it considered the ordinary law insufficient to check violation of the salt law, non-payment of land revenue, and picketing of liquor shops and British goods shops. They insisted that Government must act swiftly to check the violation of laws and progress of the movement, to protect the Government's prestige and to support the supporters of Government. The Bombay Government also pressed for more executive powers against the movement and for further assistance from Delhi.*

*The movement was certainly intense in Bombay, Gujarat, Pune, the coastal districts of Maharashtra, and even the interior parts in the province. Outside the Bombay Presidency, the only provinces where the movement gained momentum were Bengal, Madras and the U. P. In C. P. and Berar the Salt Satyagraha was much less intense, while Civil Disobedience was observed by violation of the forest laws. The movement aroused little enthusiasm and swiftly degenerated into a farce in Punjab, and Delhi showed little interest. Assam and Orissa also did not show active interest in the movement. Just as C. P. and Berar's emphasis was on Forest Satyagraha, so in Bihar Dr. Rajendra Prasad and the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee laid emphasis on local issues, such as, the Chaukidari tax, land revenue, etc.*

### **GENESIS OF THE MOVEMENT**

*" On 14 February, the All-India Congress Committee at Ahmedabad gave Gandhiji and his followers full powers to initiate Civil Disobedience wherever and in whatever manner they chose. All Congressmen were to adhere to complete non-violence, notwithstanding any provocation. Boycott of law courts and schools was also recommended. In pursuance to the " charter of freedom ", as Gandhiji termed it, which was given to him by the Working Committee, he wrote to the Viceroy to concede the substance of independence immediately, failing which a mass movement was contemplated. On hearing from the Viceroy's private secretary to the contrary, Gandhiji set out from Sabarmati to the Dandi beach on 12 March, where he proposed to make salt in defiance of the salt laws.*

*" The inauguration of Civil Disobedience is an important landmark in the history of Bombay. The advent of the movement generated a polarisation of political, economic and social forces in the city. Civil Disobedience along with the devastating Great Depression affected Bombay with great severity. Unemployment incidental to depression was a significant political factor because the labour force was highly volatile.*

The volatility was built up from years of inflation, recession, wage cuts and retrenchment. The Government had failed to solve the city's pressing social problems. Hence Civil Disobedience also brought in its trail an element of violence. Secondly, it also brought with it boycott of foreign firms and goods, while Government and industrialists vociferously propagated that Civil Disobedience had intensified the evil effects of the depression. The Congress had a ready audience for the view that Government's fiscal policy was the root of the depression, amongst the marketeers and the middle class society. It is, therefore, particularly necessary to furnish a rather comprehensive narration of the ominous Civil Disobedience Movement in Bombay"<sup>1</sup>.

Gandhiji's choice of violation of the salt law as a symbol of Civil Disobedience was a superbly ingenious choice since condemnation of a tax on a necessity of life imposed by an alien Government was sure to serve as a mass rallying cry and to rouse sympathy in England and America. Just as salt had a publicity value and economic significance, it had also a low violence potential. Hence its choice as a symbol of injustice. The world economic depression, which had caused a catastrophic fall in the prices of agricultural produce and in employment, was another significant factor in the satyagraha campaign. Gandhiji had already tested public temper by seeking response to the pledge of Independence by celebrating 26 January 1930 as Independence Day. It was intended to declare that we will be satisfied with nothing less than Complete Independence, Purna Swaraj, as distinct from Dominion Status. It was a proclamation of "the inalienable right of the Indian people to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth". In pursuance of the "charter of freedom", as Gandhiji termed it, he wrote to the Viceroy to concede the substance of Independence immediately, failing which a mass movement was to be inaugurated. On hearing from the Viceroy's private secretary to the contrary, Gandhiji launched on the Dandi march.

The first phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Salt Satyagraha, began with Gandhiji's marathon march on a 240 mile route from Sabarmati to Dandi on 12 March 1930. This historic walkathon was a dramatic prelude designed not just to publicise Gandhiji's appeal for Civil Disobedience but to educate the people in the struggle for freedom with a religious zeal, as a pilgrimage rather than political gesture. The Collector of Ahmedabad noted the religious aura which surrounded the Dandi march, as Gandhiji's followers kept quoting the Gospels and singing holy songs. The Collector compared Mahatmaji with Jesus Christ setting to go to Jerusalem<sup>2</sup>.

Gandhiji, who led the satyagraha in person, designed the march not merely to publicise his appeal for Civil Disobedience but to educate Indians, and particularly villagers, in the qualities essential for true

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<sup>1</sup>. K. K. Chaudhari *History of Bombay : Modern Period* (Gazetteers Department, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1987), p. 190.

<sup>2</sup>. K. K. Chaudhari, *Maharashtra and Indian Freedom Struggle*, pp. 80-81.

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*Swaraj. The satyagrahis used to sleep in the open and eat the simplest food. All they asked of villagers was the raw food, a clean resting and washing place, and information about human and animal population, Khadi and spinning work, land revenue demand and salt consumption in villages on the way. No servants were allowed, no luxuries. There were no lengthy speeches, Gandhiji spoke briefly about the cruel taxation, Khadi, cow-protection, untouchability, temperance and regeneration of the Indian society to make itself worthy of Swaraj.*

*Gandhiji reached Dandi on 5 April 1930. The following morning he bathed in the sea and then picked up a handful of salt and mud in violation of the salt laws. This was signal for a nation-wide campaign of Civil Disobedience. Very disciplined batches of satyagrahis then filled up pots and pans of sea water and boiled it to extract salt. There was not much of salt as it had been destroyed by Government employees. The Satyagraha movement was simultaneously inaugurated at Vile Parle in Bombay on the same morning (6 April). The inauguration of the movement coincided with the anniversary of the Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919.*

*Gandhiji had nominated Jamnalal Bajaj as the first "dictator" of Bombay. The Civil Disobedience Committee under Bajaj performed the inaugural of the movement at Vile Parle, with elaborate preparations. The chief architects of the movement in Bombay and Maharashtra were Jamnalal Bajaj, K. F. Nariman, Goculbhai Bhatt, Kishorelal Mashruwala, Shankarrao Deo. G. V. Ketkar, Vasudev Vithal Dastane, Dr. V. N. Athalye, S. D. Jawadekar and Anant Vasudeo Sahastrabuddhe. The Maharashtra Civil Disobedience Committee, with headquarters at Pune, under the presidentship of Shankarrao Deo, mobilised mass support to the Civil Disobedience at Vile Parle. Several batches of Congress satyagrahis from almost all districts of Western Maharashtra participated in the Salt Satyagraha at Vile Parle. Many of them from Thane, Raigad, Pune, Satara, Jalgaon and Ahmadnagar districts came to Bombay on foot. It were Shankarrao Deo and S. D. Jawadekar who had enthused the satyagrahis with an unflinching determination to confront the Government with the Gandhian way of fighting against tyranny.*

*The satyagrahis started with prayers in the serene atmosphere at Juhu-Vile Parle in the morning of 6 April. They manufactured edible salt by boiling sea water in cement pans. "It was a grand spectacle to see. Men, women and children brought water and prepared salt, the salt symbolic of India's independence. The inaugural ceremony was so successful that the bureaucracy, in spite of orders of the Viceroy to the contrary, could not but arrest and sentence Jamnalal, Mashruwala, K. F. Nariman (President of the BPCC) and Bhatt to two years' rigorous imprisonment. Kasturba Gandhi and Janakidevi Bajaj were camping in the Vile Parle chhavani till it was declared unlawful in August 1930. They inspired ladies to participate in the operation. Hundreds of ladies broke their traditional seclusion and came on the battlefield."<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>, K. K. Chaudhari, *Maharashtra and Indian Freedom Struggle*, p. 81.

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*The Salt Satyagraha was more intense in the Bombay Presidency than any other province. The main source of salt supply in this region was sea salt made in the salt works owned or leased out by the Government, the main works being at Dharasana, Chharvada and Wadala. As soon as the Satyagraha started the salt department destroyed natural salt formations. Hence the popular method of violation of law was boiling sea water or water containing brine. The satyagrahis used to boil water in big pans. In order to prevent police destruction of this endeavour, the Congressmen surrounded the operation by several rings of volunteers with tightly linked arms. At times 25 to 30 rings of satyagrahis surrounded the salt works. Some of the rings were formed by women and strong youngmen. It was an extremely prolonged and exasperating task for the police to break through these rings of volunteers.*

*Some salt was smuggled from Goa and Princely States on the coast. The sale of contraband salt was quite large.*

—Editor.

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